

# Community Design Charrette Program

## APPLICATION PACKET



# Community Design Charrette Program

## WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

A Plan NH Community Design Charrette is a **collaborative, community-based** planning process that brings together local stakeholders and a multidisciplinary team of volunteer professionals to generate actionable ideas for strengthening a community.

Charrettes focus on specific areas—such as village centers, downtowns, neighborhoods, and corridors—and typically address planning and design challenges related to walkability, safety, economic vitality, and overall revitalization.

## HOW IT WORKS

Communities apply to participate in the program. Once selected, a team of Plan NH volunteers works with the community over the course of a two-day, intensive charrette:

### Day 1:

The team tours the project area and engages with community members, leaders, and stakeholders to understand local priorities, challenges, and opportunities.

### Day 2:

The team collaborates to develop planning and design recommendations, which are shared with the community in a final presentation.

Following the charrette, Plan NH provides a report summarizing key findings and recommendations. To see reports from past charrettes, please visit our website at [www.plannh.org](http://www.plannh.org) and visit the Programs tab.

## WHY WE DO THIS

Plan NH is a membership organization of professionals in planning, design, and related fields who are committed to strengthening New Hampshire's communities. We believe that the built environment plays a critical role in shaping social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Through the charrette process, we help communities:

- Explore new ideas and possibilities
- Build consensus and shared vision
- Strengthen connections among residents, stakeholders, and leaders

Just as important as the recommendations themselves is the sense of alignment and momentum that often emerges from the process.

## OUR IMPACT


Since 1996, Plan NH has conducted 80+ charrettes in more than 70 communities across New Hampshire. Each project is unique—but all share a common goal: helping communities create more vibrant, resilient, and connected places.

## Contact Us

 (603) 452-PLAN

 [info@plannh.org](mailto:info@plannh.org)

 [www.plannh.org](http://www.plannh.org)

 PO Box 1105  
Portsmouth, NH 03802

 c/o JSA Inc.  
273 Corporate Drive #100  
Portsmouth, NH 03801



Since the first charrette in Belmont in 1996, Plan NH has conducted over 80 charrettes in 70+ communities across the State.



# Application for Community Design Charrette Program

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**This proposal is hereby submitted on behalf of:**

Name of Organization Applying: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name & Title of Officer Authorized to Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Officer Authorized to Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the date of your latest Master Plan? \_\_\_\_\_ If your community has been designated a Housing Champion by the NH BEA, in what year? \_\_\_\_\_

List other entities, if any, that you are partnering with on this application: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Please respond to the following questions (3–4 pages total). Be as clear and specific as possible.

### 1. Project Overview

Describe the project or area for which your community is seeking assistance, including:

- Geographic location and boundaries
- Key features, current uses, and historic significance
- Known challenges or opportunities
- Ownership or control of the project area

Explain how this project could enhance the overall health, vitality, and sense of place in your community.

*Please include a map or aerial image with the project area clearly identified.*



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## 2. Community Context & Change

What major changes or trends are affecting your community's future? Consider factors such as demographic shifts, economic conditions, housing needs, climate or environmental impacts, transportation or infrastructure challenges. How could this project help your community respond to one or more of these challenges?

## 3. Community Vision & Alignment

Communities are shaped by four interconnected sectors: social, economic, environmental, and governance.

- What is your community's vision for each of these areas?
- How might a charrette help advance that vision within the project area?
- How does this effort align with your current Master Plan or other adopted plans?

## 4. Community Connections & Broader Impact

How is the project area connected to the rest of your community?

- What influence could this area have on other parts of town?
- How do other areas of town impact this project site?
- Are there relationships or impacts involving neighboring communities?

## ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

### Letters of Support

Provide letters demonstrating alignment and support from key leadership and governing boards (e.g., Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, Economic Development, etc.). Strong, unified support is essential, and applications without it cannot be considered.

### Program Fee

Unless otherwise discussed, a fee of \$6,500 is required on or before the first day of the charrette.

## SUBMISSION PROCESS

Proposals can be submitted to [info@plannh.org](mailto:info@plannh.org) in PDF format. Please do not hesitate to call with any questions, or to discuss a project you have in mind.

Contact: Tiffany Tononi McNamara, Plan NH Executive Director | (603) 452-7526 | [tiffany@plannh.org](mailto:tiffany@plannh.org)



# Community Design Charrette Checklist

*This list outlines the materials and arrangements your community must provide to ensure a successful charrette; please note it is not exhaustive.*

## PRE-EVENT PLANNING

### Venue & Logistics

- Secure event location (ADA accessible)
  - Large, well-lit space with wall space for hanging plans
  - Reliable Wi-Fi and ample electrical outlets
  - AV capabilities for projecting the final presentation
  - Space for:
    - Large group listening sessions
    - Team meetings and breakout work
    - Saturday work sessions
- Confirm accessible restroom facilities
- Arrange overnight accommodations for team (as needed)

### Community Outreach & Participation

- Promote the event using multiple channels:
  - Local newspaper articles
  - Event calendars and municipal postings
  - Social media and town website
  - Downtown signage/message boards
- Personally invite:
  - Key community leaders and officials
  - Stakeholders, property owners, and board members
  - Diverse voices—including skeptics/naysayers

### Food & Hospitality

- Coordinate food and refreshments:
  - Friday lunch
  - Friday dinner (consider including municipal staff and/or other key members of the host committee)
  - Saturday breakfast
  - Saturday lunch
  - Snacks and water (both days)

### Funding

- Secure program funding (\$6,500 unless otherwise arranged)

## MATERIALS & INFORMATION

### Maps & Visuals

- Provide maps of the project area (same scale preferred, e.g., 1" = 100'):
  - Property/tax maps
  - Topography
  - Aerial imagery (with property lines if possible)
  - Natural features (wetlands, etc.)
- Provide at least two copies of each map
- Confirm map needs with team leader(s) in advance

### Reference Materials

- Copies of:
  - Master Plan (most recent)
  - Zoning ordinance
  - Relevant studies/reports
- Historical photos of the project area (if available)

## EVENT SETUP (DAY OF)

### Registration & Flow

- Sign-in table with:
  - Name tags
  - Sign-in sheets
  - Staff/volunteer to greet attendees

### Room Setup

- Tables for public sessions and team work sessions (8-10)
- Chairs arranged for:
  - Stakeholder session (large circle)
  - Public sessions (small groups of 6–8)
- Adequate seating based on expected turnout

### Facilitation Supplies

- Easels and flip charts (ideally one per group)
- Markers, pens, tape, and other supplies

### Documentation & Media - optional

- Assign or hire a photographer/videographer
- Record final presentation and post online



# Charrette Schedule

*Actual start and end times may vary if mutually agreed upon.*

## Friday –

- 10:00 Team gathers. Introduction of team members, review of project/challenge.
- 10:15 - 11:45 Site Tour - Team walks or buses the target area, led by key town leaders and other stakeholders.
- 11:45 - 12:45 Lunch - *While community members are welcome to observe, this is a team time.* Team leaders review project, schedule, and expectations. Team discusses observations from the site tour.
- 1:00 - 2:30 Stakeholder Session - Team meets with community leaders and other stakeholders related to the project/target area in order to gather technical information and data pertinent to the project.
- 3:00 - 4:30 First Public Listening Session
- 4:45 - 5:45 Dinner
- 6:00 - 7:30 Second Public Listening Session
- 7:30 - 8:00 Team Debrief
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## Saturday –

- 8:00 - 12:00 Breakfast - Team meets to review target area and what was learned over the course of Saturday and to brainstorm recommendations, breaking into smaller work groups to further develop recommendations.
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch - Team members share status updates with one another and continue working.
- 1:00 - 2:30 Team finalizes recommendations in preparation for the 3:00 PM presentation.
- 3:00 - 4:30 Public Presentation - Team presents to the community about what they saw and heard throughout the charrette as well as the recommendations developed by the team.
- 4:30 - 5:00 Team Debrief and Adjournment



# Frequently Asked Questions

## COST & FUNDING

### How much does the program cost?

There is no fee to apply. If selected and unless otherwise noted, the charrette program fee is \$6,500, due on or before the first day of the charrette. In addition, the community provides meeting space, meals, and (in some cases) lodging for the volunteer team.

### What if our municipality cannot fund the fee?

Communities often assemble funding from multiple sources, including grants, donations, or partner organizations. While funding can come from a variety of sources, the municipality remains the primary client and project lead for most charrettes. Applicable grants may be available through NH Housing, the NH Charitable Foundation, AARP, NH Community Development Finance Authority, or other sources.

## VALUE & OUTCOMES

### What do we receive for that money?

Depending on the project, communities receive \$25,000–\$80,000 worth of professional services, including:

- A multidisciplinary team of volunteer experts
- A facilitated, community-driven planning process
- Conceptual design and planning recommendations
- A final report with graphics and implementation ideas

Beyond the deliverables, the charrette builds momentum, fosters collaboration, and helps align community members around a shared vision.

### What if we don't agree with the recommendations?

Charrette outcomes are recommendations—not mandates. They are grounded in best practices and shaped by community input, but they are not binding. Communities are encouraged to use them as a foundation for further discussion, refinement, and decision-making.

## PROJECT FIT

### What types of projects are a good fit for a charrette?

Charrettes are best suited for community-scale challenges such as downtowns, corridors, neighborhoods, or other areas where planning and design can have broad impact. Projects typically involve topics like walkability, safety, economic vitality, housing, or overall revitalization.

### Can you help with a specific building or site?

Charrettes do not typically focus on single buildings in isolation. However, a building may be considered as part of a larger area or district. If your community already has a clear vision and is seeking detailed design for a specific site, working with a private consultant may be more appropriate.

### Can a private developer apply?

No. Plan NH works with municipalities or public-sector partners. While project areas may include privately owned land, the municipality must lead the application and serve as the primary client.

### Can a Regional Planning Commission apply on behalf of a community?

Yes. Regional Planning Commissions and other partners are welcome collaborators. However, the municipality must be actively involved and provide formal support, as they remain the primary client.

## PROCESS & TIMING

### What happens after we submit an application?

Applications are reviewed by the Charrette Committee. Selected communities are typically invited to participate in a follow-up conversation or site visit to further discuss the project and confirm readiness. Once accepted, a charrette date is scheduled collaboratively.

### When are applications due?

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Projects are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis, so early submission is encouraged.

### How long does it take to prepare for a charrette?

We recommend allowing 10–12 weeks for preparation once your project is accepted. This time is critical for organizing logistics, engaging stakeholders, and building community awareness.

## STILL NOT SURE?

### We have a potential project but aren't sure if it's a good fit. Can we talk it through?

Absolutely. We encourage communities to reach out early to discuss ideas, refine project scope, and determine whether a charrette is the right approach.

To see reports from past charrettes, please visit our website at [www.plannh.org](http://www.plannh.org) and visit the Programs tab.

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

If you have questions or would like to discuss a potential project, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Tiffany Tononi McNamara, Executive Director | (603) 452-7526 | [tiffany@plannh.org](mailto:tiffany@plannh.org)

